

INFORMATION REPORT

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COUNTRY Albania

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SUBJECT Economic Situation in Albania

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SUPPLEMENT TO
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1. The economic situation becomes worse daily. During April, in certain regions of Albania, six kilos of corn were distributed to each person; even those who had only animals used for cultivating were obliged to pay in meat for this corn. Government agencies concerned indicated that there would be no further distribution of corn. The black market in food is said to be flourishing; in fact, the government is even being accused of actually encouraging it, by taking no remedial action even though well aware of its existence.
2. Except for public or government servants and those people employed in industry and in rebuilding (whose ration cards have not been abolished), all other Albanians must procure their necessities by exchange, since their ration cards are no longer valid.
3. Characteristic examples of prevalent circumstances allegedly due to official government practices are the following:
 - a. One oke of corn (basic foodstuff for the Albanian) is priced at 200-250 lek, or \$4.00 - \$5.00, in the black market.
 - b. Olive oil does not exist.
 - c. Butter on the black market is priced at 1300 lek per kilo, or \$26.00.
 - d. In the government cooperative store at Sarande 800 kilos of first quality oranges were exchanged for three meters of poor quality Japanese silk, three kilos of salt and three kilos of crude oil.
 - e. In the government cooperative store at Vlone, one farmer delivered 39,000 oranges, for which he received one pair of shoes of native manufacture.
 - f. The highest daily wage in Albania amounts to 150 lek, and the lowest 75 lek. Workers' wages vary between 2500-4000 lek per month.

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An indication of the situation thus created is revealed in the following letter written to General Hoxha by a soldier, and printed in the newspaper, "Baskiki":

"Dear Leader, Comrade Enver

"As a soldier of the National Army, I have served in the D.M.P., and as a non-commissioned officer in unit 736 of 17 Regiment in the Region of Vorra. I served for the good of the people, the nation, the Party and our people's democracy.

"I did my duty in accordance with the orders I received. Now I have been discharged and have been with my family for a few days ready to return and work wherever the Party should order me. I have served and will always be ready to serve every need of the Party and the people. For the Party I am even ready to lay down my life, and I assure you that I, who have suffered much and know the troubles of the people, shall work with zeal and self-sacrifice wherever the Party asks me to.

"I have been a partisan since 1944, served four years in the D.M.P. and for two and one-half years I have been a member of the Party. The day I was discharged from the D.M.P. I was saddened.

"I would like to tell you a little about my village. It is now a week, Comrade Enver, since I returned to my village, and unfortunately I found many unpleasant things. Not only my village, but all the people are so dissatisfied that it cannot become worse.

"The people are dissatisfied for the following reasons:

- a. Because of the new barter system, since they have nothing to exchange and consequently can get nothing.
- b. Because of the obligatory meat tax which makes it necessary for the villages to turn over to the State cooperatives the animals they use for cultivation, since they have no others.
- c. Because of the bread situation.

"Most of the people do not have bread, and consequently they go to the black market to buy it for 7000-8000 lek per kilo. Since they do not have any money, they must previously sell in the black market the animals which they would use for cultivation.

"As a Communist I consider it my duty to advise the Party of all these things so that it might know the condition of the people, since it wants a stable economy and wants its people to live well. From my observations the few days that I have been here, nothing works well, there is lack of work, the local units of the Party are not doing good work, the cooperatives are not regularly supplied, work is proceeding very slowly, and no control whatsoever exists. The people are ignorant of everything, such as the laws, the question of supplies, etc. For these reasons the people are as angry as is possible to be, but they can do nothing about it.

"They hate the Party very much and therefore the Party must take appropriate measures. The question of supply must be solved because there is not even salt and the people are complaining. Also, there is no petroleum to be used for lighting, and both these products are domestic.

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"The people say they do not want clothing, but want the products of the country. A meat tax has been determined even for those who have no animals, something which is, I think, not right because they slaughter their draft animals to meet it.

"With such a tax, agriculture will be completely destroyed. I, as a member of the Party, have verified many grave errors in the region of Mallakashtra, errors greater than those I have seen in areas I have visited.

"I write to you because I am saddened by all this, but also to tell you that we have fought and many good comrades have died so that we might reach better days, as you know better than I do.

"I have also a little to tell you of the 736 unit. My release from it was not one such as to be given to an old partisan, but rather one such as is given to a soldier of the class of 1947, and for this reason I am dissatisfied, but do not know where to address my grievance.

"I close with respect as a ready Communist.

/s/ Sgt. Safet Malaj

from the village of Lapulec-Mallakaster
Ballesh"

General Hoxha answered this letter, admitting the shortcomings mentioned and recommending patience because only in this way can Socialism become strong.

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